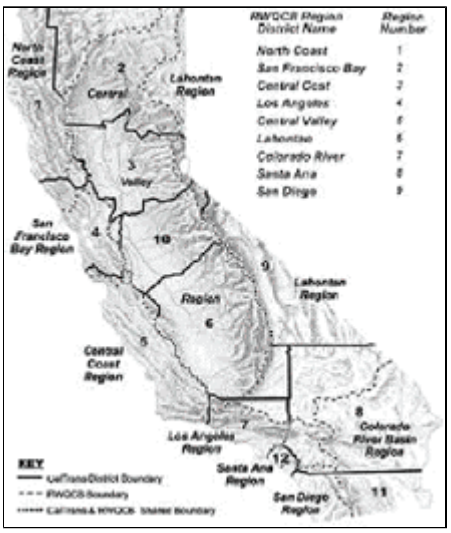
MAY 2001 VOL 5, NO. 5

Construction Dewatering Operations Part III: Dewatering Under a RWQCB Permit

This bulletin continues the series on managing Construction dewatering operations to prevent storm water pollution. This bulletin describes the process of dewatering under a Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) dewatering permit. A RWQCB NPDES dewatering permit is almost always required for dewatering discharges of groundwater, water from cofferdams or diversions, and sometimes dewatering of accumulated precipitation.



Step 1: Notifying the RWQCB

If dewatering effluent is to be discharged to a storm drain or receiving water, first notify the RWQCB that has jurisdiction over the construction site (map), providing them with the results of any water quality tests that have been done (if any).

Permit requirements vary by Region. For example, many Regions allow the discharge of unpolluted accumulated rainwater under the Caltrans Statewide NPDES Permit, but require a separate RWQCB permit for groundwater or water from cofferdams and diversions.

Step 2: Applying for the Permit

If a Regional NPDES dewatering permit is required, obtain an application package from the RWQCB office.

- Most Regions have one or more general NPDES dewatering permits in place. In these Regions, an application to discharge under the applicable permit is submitted.
- In Regions without general dewatering permits, a site-specific permit must be applied for.

The following table identifies the Regions with general NPDES dewatering permits.

RWQCB Region No.	Regional General Permit?	Order No.	For:
1	No	Site-specific permit only	
2	No	Site-specific permit only	
3	No	Site-specific permit only	
4	Yes	97-043 97-045	Treated groundwater Untreated groundwater
5	Yes	5-00-175	Low threat discharges
6	Yes	6-98-36	Limited threat discharges
7	No	Site-specific permit only	
8	Yes	98-67	Insignificant threat discharges
9	Yes	95-25 96-41	Discharge to San Diego Bay Discharge to other waters

The boundaries of the nine RWQCB Regions are named and the twelve Caltrans Districts are numbered.

Step 3: Pre-Discharge Testing

As part of the application procedure, the RWQCB generally requires the water to be tested for possible pollutants. Required tests are generally based on the source of the water, land use history of the construction site, and potential impacts to the quality of the receiving water.

The RWQCB evaluates the test results to determine if the water can be discharged under an NPDES dewatering permit, and if so, any treatment required to remove pollutants prior to discharge.

Step 4: Waste Discharge Authorization
Upon approval of a permit application, the RWQCB issues a Waste Discharge Authorization (WDA) to the contractor. The WDA identifies site-specific requirements for the dewatering operation.

Step 5: Discharging
Discharge of dewatering effluents in conformance with the WDA and the NPDES permit is allowed. Discharge provisions may include requirements for testing/ monitoring, treatment to remove pollutants, and limitations on discharge volume and/or duration.

Steps 6: Monitoring
The WDA contains the site-specific Monitoring Program for the operation, including specific tests and testing frequencies. Effluent testing may be required (1) before treatment, (2) after treatment, and (3) at the point of discharge to the receiving water. All test results must be recorded and reported.

Step 7: Reporting
The WDA also defines the site-specific Reporting Program, including format, content and frequency of reports to be made to the RWQCB. Reporting also includes notification of non-compliant conditions and completion of the dewatering operation. Copies of all test results, correspondence, treatment, monitoring, and inspections should be maintained with your Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan/Water Pollution Control Program (SWPPP/WPCP).

STORM WATER HOME